From: Paul Farwell
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/14/02 10:34am
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

I want to voice my concerns about the proposed December 7th settlement of Microsoft antitrust case. These views are my own and not those of my current or previous employers.

As an experienced software developer, I see effects of Microsoft's monopoly on the software industry that are probably invisible to the average software user. It's been my responsibility to investigate and recommend software tools to my employer. In many cases, there is a reluctance to consider anything other than a solution using Microsoft tools and technology. The reason is not necessarily because Microsoft solutions (like Visual C++ or Visual Basic) are considered better than the alternatives. It's the concern that alternative solutions have no built-in support for deploying applications on the Windows operating system, which a large majority of our customers use.

Java technology is a really good case in point. For years, Java has had the potential to provide users with complete and powerful applications on their web browsers in a browser-independent and OS-independent way. It is a much better tool for writing sophisticated web applications than HTML, which has become the de facto standard for web user interfaces. Most users don't realize how primitive most web applications are because they don't know what the alternatives are. While it is true that HTML is an open standard, one not controlled by Microsoft, it is also very limited. HTML is good at presenting text and pictures, but is a poor technology for developing a good web application, like a on-line scheduling tool. It amazes me that even today most web applications are displayed in HTML (and JavaScript). Why is that? Java applets would be the primary tool used in web applications if Internet Explorer had not won the 'browser wars'. IE's support for applets is poor because it offers out-dated (or nonexistent) Java support. Microsoft has attempted to introduce their own active content solution, ActiveX, but this solution limits the software developer to Microsoft technology on both the front-end (the browser) and the back-end (the middleware services on the network

host). It works only if the software developer takes
the 'Microsoft everywhere' approach.

It is very frustrating to see software vendors avoid
Java technology, not because of the merits or demerits
of the technology itself, but because of the
perception that Microsoft won't support it. Ordinary
consumers of software may not fully appreciate this,
but it does have a powerful effect on the kinds of
products we can deliver to them.

As a remedy, it makes sense to me that Microsoft
supply a complete and up-to-date version of Java with
every copy of the Windows operating system. This would
remove the burden from the software vendor of
struggling to get good Java support on an end-user's
computer. That way, Java technology could be judged on
its merits, not on whether Microsoft supports it.

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